



# Recovering the *Pacific Gayle*

*Logistics and teamwork.*

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On November 26, 2004, the *Pacific Gayle*, a 58-foot steel crabbing vessel, went aground approximately two miles north of Usal Beach on the coast of California. After U.S. Coast Guard Station Noyo River Mobile Unit had rescued the captain and crew, Parker Diving Service was called to manage all environmental issues and to see if the *Pacific Gayle* could be safely removed from this remote shoreline.

## ***Gayle Aground***

On November 27, 2004, a team, including representa-

tives from Parker Diving Service and the National Response Corp.; Coast Guard Chief Warrant Officer John LaFlamme; California Department of Fish and Game Warden Joaquin Mariante; California State Parks and Recreation Supervising Ranger Kelly Roach; and *Pacific Gayle's* owner Tim Estes and his insurance surveyor, Kevin Moore, put their heads together to devise a method to remove any hazardous material. Columbia Helicopters, Portland, Ore., was contracted to fly in all necessary equipment and remove any hazardous materials and items including crab pots, lines, and buoys that could entrap marine wildlife.



**Figure 1: The *Pacific Gayle* aground.**

The contracted helicopter was unable to land at the vessel wreck site, so all personnel had to hike the two miles to the *Pacific Gayle*. Work, nonetheless, commenced quickly, and by November 28, 2004, all hazardous material had been safely removed.

When it came time to address moving the vessel, team members determined that refloating the vessel and pulling it to sea would greatly increase the risk to the environment, equipment, and personnel as opposed to dismantling the vessel in place and air-lifting the pieces out. After much discussion, it was agreed that, due to limited daylight hours, impending winter storms, extreme high tides, and the rough terrain, the salvage efforts would be put off until spring. In the meantime, the *Pacific Gayle* would be nature's guest (Figure 1).

### Removal Requires Teamwork, Planning

During the winter, Parker Diving Service checked on the *Pacific Gayle* several times, and each time the ocean had changed the vessel's position. After checking tides in April, the company formulated a safe wreck removal plan. Working with all agencies, every aspect of the job was discussed. It was determined that the safest way to dismantle the vessel was to use explosives. Randy and Patty Messer, from Western Blasting Technologies, Marysville, Calif., were contracted to do the explosive work. Airlift Helicopters, Reno, Nev., was contracted to provide a Hughes 500 helicopter to transport equipment and personnel.

Representatives from Parker Diving Service, Western Blasting Technologies, Air Lift Helicopters, the Coast Guard, the California Department of Fish and Game, and California State Parks and Recreation met with the insurance underwriters and the owner to formulate a plan for the *Gayle's* removal. The first safety meeting lasted over two hours.

Safety, of course, was the first priority. The California Department of Fish and Game was responsible for the safety of all persons, including the public, the contractors, and crew. California State Parks had the daunting task of closing down 100 miles of popular, remote

parkland and keeping the general public out of the danger zone. The Coast Guard was tasked with ensuring that the explosives were properly stored, handled, and detonated. In addition the Coast Guard secured the blast zone: a radius of one mile offshore of the wreck site. Parker Diving Service guards were

placed strategically in four areas surrounding the immediate danger zone.

### Success

Between April 25 and April 29, 2005, the team dismantled the vessel. After four blasts (Figure 2) and many man-hours, the *Pacific Gayle* was now a pile of steel rubble (Figure 3).

On May 10, 2005, Parker Diving Service returned to Usal Beach with a Columbia Helicopters 234 Chinook and, in less than four hours, removed 100,000 pounds of steel from the shoreline to a landing zone on the Campbell Timberland property. The company's crew cut the rubble into pieces small enough to fit in

trucks, and the remains of the *Pacific Gayle* were loaded and trucked to Sims Metal Recycling Center, Richmond, Calif.

*About the author:* Ms. Diane Shipway is salvage coordinator for Parker Diving Service. Her work involves coordinating with all agencies involved in an incident, preparing safety plans, and coordinating subcontractors and equipment. Prior to joining Parker Diving Service, Ms. Shipway was owner/operator of Vessel Assist, a towing and salvage company.



**Figure 2: The vessel was dismantled using explosives.**



**Figure 3: The *Pacific Gayle*, in pieces.**